

July 16, 2012

House Energy and Commerce Committee, Subcommittee on Energy and Power

Field Hearing: "The American Energy Initiative: A Focus on EPA's Proposed Greenhouse Gas New Source Performance Standard for Utilities and the Impact this Regulation Will Have on Jobs"

Testimony by Donna Kessinger

Thank you Chairman Whitfield and other members of the committee for this opportunity to speak with you today. It is an honor and a privilege to be here.

My name is Donna Kessinger. I live southwest Virginia and work at Cliffs Natural Resources' Pinnacle mine in Wyoming County, West Virginia. I am here today not as representative of my employer but as a private citizen – a coal miner and mother who works hard to provide for my family -- and I want to share my story.

I work in a metallurgical coal mine as a certified electrician and mechanic, and I am a member of the United Mine Workers of America Local 1713. My job duties include inspecting electrical installations and equipment to ensure they operate in accordance with all state and federal laws and regulations that govern coal mining. More importantly, my job is to keep my coworkers safe by making sure our equipment functions properly. I work underground every day, and I am incredibly proud of the work I do.

When my shift is done each day, I go home to take care of my beautiful 8-year-old girl named Haven. I am a single mother. Coal mining has allowed me as a single mother to provide a better standard of living for my daughter than I would be able to otherwise. The same is true for my coworkers and their families.

Our jobs allow us to put food on the table, buy clothes for our children and provide our families with good health care so we can lead productive lives. Coal mining makes this possible. Coal mining also provides the foundation for entire communities because it supports local businesses, which are the heartbeat that keep many small towns alive.

As many of you are aware, several coal companies have announced layoffs because of decreased market demand that has been compounded by the decisions of federal regulators who have made their distaste for coal mining known even though they are blind to the real-world economic consequences of their actions.

My industry is under attack, and that means my job is under attack. America's future economic prosperity depends on the availability of affordable, abundant coal resources. Furthermore, my livelihood and the well-being of my family is at stake.

As I said before, I am proud to be a coal miner. This is an honorable profession that should be respected, not disparaged by those who have no solutions, just loud voices.

Please help me and others like me, proud Americans who want to work hard and provide for our families. We are not asking for special treatment or a handout. We simply want to be allowed to work.

Thank you.